



**Iowa Department of Public Health**  
**Promoting and Protecting the Health of Iowans**

## *Creating Tobacco –Free Rodeos in Iowa*

In Iowa, approximately 12 rodeo companies and/or rodeo organizations exist. Many of these rodeos are recognized by the Iowa Association of County Fairs. Some of the rodeos listed on this website, will be featured around the state of Iowa during the fair season. [Click here](#) for rodeo companies that are listed on the Iowa Association of County Fairs website.

Rodeos bring communities together to share civic pride, time with family, and memories of the Old West. Rodeos also allow communities to express themselves and teach traditions to their children.

Unfortunately, the great tradition of rodeo has been stained by the image of tobacco.

Whether your goal is to eliminate tobacco sponsorship, eliminate tobacco usage from the rodeo grounds, or both, this fact sheet will help you. Cowboys and ponies may travel from city to city, but the traditions and memories of the rodeo stay in the community long after the competitions are over. Creating a tobacco-free rodeo helps to build healthy and positive traditions for generations to come.

### **The History of Rodeo**

The first recorded rodeo in America took place in 1864, although it is believed that unrecorded rodeos have been in existence since the early 1700's. Cowboys and ranchers competed to determine who was the fastest and strongest at some of the day-to-day challenges of life on the range. These competitions included riding and roping techniques on horses and cattle. By the 1890's, cowboys began to travel the country and make a living in professional rodeo.

Today, rodeos take many forms. Men and women of all ages compete in rodeo competitions and people from a variety of backgrounds come to rodeos to enjoy the show. More than 170,000 fans attend the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas every December and more than 13 million viewers tune into the finals on ESPN; rodeo is certainly more popular and competitive than ever.

### **The Connection of Rodeo and Tobacco Sponsorship**

Rodeo is almost 150 years old, but it wasn't until the 1970's that tobacco companies began to realize the benefit of promoting their brands to millions of rodeo fans. In 1972, R.J. Reynolds became the first tobacco company to sponsor rodeos. The U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company (USST) began contacts with rodeo associations in the mid-1980s and is now the biggest tobacco rodeo sponsor. USST had exclusive partnerships with several rodeo associations including the Professional Cowboys Association, and Professional Bull Riders prior to 2010.

Sponsorship of rodeo has changed since "*Regulations Restricting the Sale and Distribution of Cigarettes and Smokeless Tobacco to Protect Children and Adolescents*", which restricts the sale, distribution, and promotion of tobacco products to make them less accessible and less attractive to kids. The rule went into effect on June 22, 2010. This means that tobacco companies cannot directly sponsor/give money to, for instance, a rodeo. BUT, they can still be present at the event (if invited by the event organizers) in the form of a booth/table where they hand out coupons or other promotional materials or samples. We are still seeing some of the latter going on with local community events, but as long as they don't directly sponsor the event, it is allowed under FDA. This is where a group like a rodeo could adopt a voluntary policy that says tobacco companies will not have any presence at their event.

## Why Tobacco-Free Rodeos?

Tobacco company names and products can be seen in many areas of rodeos. When requesting the elimination of sponsorship or just zero tolerance of tobacco, be sure to think about these areas:

- Event program ads
- Signage (banners, flags, scoreboards, etc.)
- Sampling/promotional booths
- Animal names (owners are paid to name their animals after tobacco products; names might be announced or listed in the program)
- Prize/purse/scholarship money
- Logos worn by participants
- Title sponsorship (i.e., the Professional Bull Rider's "USST Challenge Tour")
- Local advertising in newspapers
- Tobacco industry tents, booths, and semi-trailers (these areas usually offer giveaways, coupons, or free samples)

## It's about Sport, not Spit

It's been said that rodeo is the toughest eight seconds in sports. Cowboys and cowgirls are strong athletes; they control thousand-pound animals with skill and grace. Tobacco usage can severely harm an athlete's ability to perform and will degenerate their overall health. Rodeo athletes are also role models for the younger generation, and spit tobacco use does not promote healthy behavior for the children in the audience. We need rodeos to provide a good example for our youth that sports and tobacco don't mix. We wouldn't want tobacco to be such a large part of other professional sports, so why should we continue to accept tobacco in the sport of rodeo?

## It's about Communities, not Corporations

Like many other community events, the rodeo is a place for people to come together. People come to reconnect with old friends, cheer on participants from the community, and browse local vendors. The community supports the rodeo and the rodeo would not survive without the community. Tobacco companies usually have no ties to a community beyond the need to sell tobacco products, and should not be allowed to soil the community's rodeo tradition simply to promote tobacco products.

## Know the Rodeo

It's important to understand the terms, events, and organizations related to the rodeo that take place in your town. Websites like the Wikipedia Encyclopedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)) and About: Rodeo (<http://rodeo.about.com>) can help you learn the terms, organizations, and history associated with American rodeo. Despite all of the information available about rodeos, perhaps the most valuable thing to understand is how the people in your community respond to the rodeo. Here are some definitions of events to help you get started:

### Common Rodeo Events

- **Barrel Racing:** A horse and rider runs a cloverleaf pattern around barrels.
- **Breakaway Roping:** A horse and rider attempts to rope a calf. Like calf roping, but roper does not tie the calf.
- **Bronc Riding:** An untamed horse attempts to throw or buck off the rider. Rider attempts to stay on the horse for eight seconds without touching the horse with his free hand.
- **Bull Riding:** A rider gets on a large bull, and attempts to stay mounted for at least eight seconds.

- **Calf Roping:** A horse and rider attempts to rope and tie the calf.
- **Mutton Busting:** A youth event similar to bull or bronc riding, but the rider is on a sheep.
- **Pole Bending:** A horse and rider runs a weaving path around six poles.
- **Steer Wrestling:** A horse and rider chases a steer, jumps off the horse next to the steer, and wrestles the steer to the ground by twisting its horns.

## Creating Tobacco-Free Rodeos

To create a tobacco-free rodeo event you must assess the community, build support for your policy, and assist with policy adoption. Here's how:

1. **Research the Rodeo:**  
Learn who makes the decisions about the rodeo (it's usually a board made up of community members), who sponsors the rodeo, and who owns the rodeo grounds. Research how often the rodeo board meets and how to get on a meeting agenda. Find out if there are any deadlines or requirements for sponsorship (sponsors may be confirmed months before a rodeo)
2. **Assess Support:**  
Find out how the community feels about a tobacco-free rodeo. You can conduct a survey to gauge the level of support for your policy request. Use your survey results when planning your presentation to the rodeo board.
3. **Develop a Sample Policy:**  
Decide if you want a policy to eliminate tobacco sponsorship, tobacco use or both. A comprehensive policy request will help ensure that the decision makers are considering a strong policy. Include rationale for the request, facilities/areas you would like included, and recommendations for who will provide enforcement (such as rodeo committee board members, private security, attendees, etc.). For a sample policy to use with tobacco-free rodeos and rodeos without tobacco company sponsorship, see the sample provided at the bottom of this fact sheet. This policy can be adapted to your event.
4. **Build Policy Support:**  
Begin contacting potential supporters (see "Who Will Support Your Message?" for ideas). Gather letters of support, petition signatures, and other proof of support. Hold your own tobacco-free rodeo event at a local park with activities for all community members (i.e., stick-horse races, face painting, etc.). Find community organizations that are able to replace tobacco sponsorship dollars with their own money.
5. **Find a Champion:**  
While building support in the community, begin to build relationships and support with rodeo board members. If you or other supporters know a board member, begin by conducting an informal interview with him/her about your policy request. Try to hold informal and educational meetings with as many board members as you can to explain why a tobacco-free rodeo is important. Contact the Iowa High School Rodeo Association and ask them to support you. In 2010 the Iowa High School Rodeo group passed tobacco-free policy making their event tobacco-free.
6. **Get on the Agenda:**  
Contact the board and indicate your interest in making a formal request for a tobacco-free rodeo policy at their upcoming meeting. Determine when and where meetings are held and how much time you will have to give your presentation. Ask about deadlines to give materials to board members.
7. **Plan your Presentation:**  
Determine who is going to speak on behalf of your group and what they are going to say. Short testimonials from youth, parents, rodeo participants and other supportive organizations will help demonstrate the need for a tobacco-free rodeo. Invite other supporters to attend the meeting to show their support.

8. **Make your Presentation and Assist with Policy Development:**  
Present the information that your group planned in step 7. Be ready to respond to questions that the board might have. After your presentation, provide the board with any additional information that they need to make a decision. Attend any remaining meetings.
9. **Assist with Policy Implementation and Promote the Message:**  
Show your appreciation for the board's support by publicly recognizing their efforts. Assist with signage and notification. Promote the policy to the community so they know they have a tobacco-free rodeo to look forward to!
10. **If the Board is Not Ready to Pass a Comprehensive Policy:** Propose that the rodeo board consider designating special events like "Family Day" or "Kids Day" as days that are free of tobacco use and tobacco company sponsorship. Go back in one year and ask the board to re-consider the policy.

### **Who Will Support Your Message?**

Gathering community support for a tobacco-free rodeo will help you present your policy request to the rodeo board. Some supporters may directly participate in the rodeo and others may be fans of the rodeo. Try contacting these potential supporters in your community.

- Rodeo celebrities like cowboys/cowgirls and rodeo queens/royalty (be sure they do not receive tobacco sponsorship money)
- Local groups and businesses that may participate in or sponsor the rodeo when the tobacco connections are gone.
- Rodeo fans and supporters
- Youth Groups (i.e. Iowa 4-H, The National FFA Organization, and the Iowa High School Rodeo Association)
- Family and youth-serving organizations
- Faith groups
- Doctors, dentists, and other health professionals

### **Suggested policy for outdoor events such as rodeos and sponsorships:**

#### ***Tobacco-Free Policy guidelines for use with Outdoor Places and Events***

#### **Fact and Purpose:**

The *(name of event)* finds that:

- a) Tobacco use in the proximity of children and adults engaging in or watching outdoor activities is detrimental to the public's health and can be dangerous to those using such facilities; and
- b) This event is a unique opportunity to create and sustain an environment that supports a non-tobacco trend, and through a tobacco-free policy, rule enforcement, proper signage, and adult-peer role modeling during; and
- c) Parents, leaders, and officials involved in community events are role models for youth and can have a positive effect on the lifestyle choices they make; and
- d) The tobacco industry advertises at and sponsors events to foster a connection between tobacco use and community events; and
- e) Tobacco products (extends to all types of tobacco), once consumed in public spaces, are often discarded on the ground requiring additional maintenance expenses, diminish the beauty of outdoor facilities, and pose a risk to toddlers, pets and exhibition animals due to ingestion; and
- f) The prohibition of tobacco use at all times will serve to protect the health, safety and welfare of the participants and all attending.

**Policy:**

Tobacco use is prohibited in event areas.

This tobacco-free policy applies to all employees, independent contractors, board members, participants in events, and the general public while in attendance. During this outdoor event the use of tobacco products of any kind is prohibited in these areas: *[list applicable areas such as all vendor areas, restrooms, concession areas, walk ways, performance areas, buildings and their entrances]*

**Enforcement:**

- a) Appropriate signs shall be posted in the above specified areas.
- b) The community, especially event attendees and staff, will be notified about this policy.
- c) It is the responsibility of the board members or their designee to provide enforcement.
- d) Any person found violating this policy will be asked to refrain from tobacco use or risk immediate ejection from the event grounds for the remainder of the event.
- e) If the violator refuses to leave, the staff may contact local authorities.

**Effective Date:**

This policy statement is effective immediately upon the date of adoption.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Appropriate Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

“This publication was originally created by the Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation program in Minnesota. [www.tobaccofreeparks.org](http://www.tobaccofreeparks.org)” Adapted for use by Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control, March, 2014. For more information about this fact sheet and policy contact 515-281-6225.